



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

Public Health

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September 15, 2006

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Jonathan E. Fielding, M.D., M.P.H. *Jeff Fielding*
Director and Health Officer

SUBJECT: **PUBLIC HEALTH'S RESPONSE TO METHAMPHETAMINE EPIDEMIC**

On September 19, 2006, the Act Now Against Meth Coalition plans to attend the Board meeting, present petitions to your Board and to advocate on behalf of increased attention to the epidemic of methamphetamine. This is to provide you with an overview of the activities of the Department of Public Health regarding the methamphetamine epidemic as a background to the presentation.

BACKGROUND

The Los Angeles County (LAC) Department of Public Health (DPH) continues to be extremely concerned about the increased prevalence of methamphetamine use in our community. Methamphetamine is a substantial and growing health threat to our community.

Health Impacts of Methamphetamine: Use of methamphetamine is associated with serious health and mental health consequences ranging from insomnia, aggression, irritability, anxiety, paranoia, and increased blood pressure to hallucinations, violent behavior, psychosis and heart attack with longer term use. Among pregnant women use of methamphetamine can result in miscarriage, premature delivery, and fetal abnormalities. Treatment admissions in LAC for methamphetamine have steadily increased over the past 4 years. There has also been a corresponding increase in emergency room drug abuse episodes involving methamphetamine which are paralleled by increases in methamphetamine-related deaths. It is now the most prevalent "drug of choice" for persons admitted to treatment programs funded by the County.

Related Health and Social Impacts: Methamphetamine abuse negatively affects not only users, but also their families, friends and neighbors. Children are exposed to toxic chemicals when methamphetamine laboratories are being operated in or near their homes. In addition, these children often are abused or neglected by the parents, guardians, or others who operate these laboratories or are addicts themselves. Methamphetamine abuse also contributes to increases in crime including identity theft, fraud, burglary, forgery and motor vehicle theft.

Methamphetamine and High Risk Sex Behavior: DPH is also alarmed by the documented association between methamphetamine use and sexual risk behavior including sexually transmitted infections, in particular HIV infection. There is evidence that suggests that methamphetamine use is associated with increased rates of HIV and other STDs among men who have sex with men (MSM). Methamphetamine use

has been linked with risky sexual behaviors including unprotected anal intercourse, multiple sexual partners, and decreased use of condoms among MSM. HIV and hepatitis risk is also associated with sharing injection equipment when methamphetamine is used intravenously.

CURRENT METHAMPHETAMINE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT EFFORTS

DPH has undertaken several activities to address the methamphetamine epidemic. These include:

Establishment of the Methamphetamine Work Group

In July 2003, Department of Health Services/Public Health brought together a group to provide input to the department in addressing Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender (GLBT) public health issues. One of the outcomes of this advisory group was the formation of a work group to examine the growing problem of methamphetamine. The Methamphetamine Work Group was convened in August 2005, to focus on the rise of methamphetamine use in LAC. The group, comprising representatives from various agencies and researchers working with methamphetamine users and representatives from Public Health programs, met five times between August 30, 2005 and June 12, 2006 and is scheduled to meet again on October 5, 2006. A subcommittee, established to develop educational resources, met an additional two times in May and June 2006. Current work group activities to date include:

- **Review of local data** on the scope and impact of methamphetamine use.
- **Development of a preliminary set of recommendations** for continued work group activities.
- **Implementation of two preliminary workgroup recommendations:** (1) formation of a subcommittee to develop educational resources regarding methamphetamine (including a fact sheet and resources manual); (2) expansion of the work group including participants from the Departments of Mental Health and Children and Family Services as well as other participants from community-based agencies.

Office of AIDS Programs and Policy (OAPP) Activities

Due to growing concern around the intersection of methamphetamine use and sexual risk behavior, OAPP has engaged in the following activities to address the methamphetamine epidemic:

- **Methamphetamine and HIV Situational Assessment:** Conducted in June 2005 this assessment was designed to identify existing gaps in HIV prevention and substance-abuse education targeting MSM. The overall goal of this process was to gather information regarding the current strategies and interventions existing in Los Angeles County (LAC) and to gain a deeper understanding of the issues associated with crystal methamphetamine use among MSM. The resulting report generated a set of recommendations to address the nexus of methamphetamine and HIV in LAC. These recommendations are complemented by a set of recommendations recently offered by the LAC HIV Prevention Planning Committee's Crystal Methamphetamine Task Force.
- **Collaboration with Community Partners:** In addition, a community-driven Summit on Methamphetamine Abatement and Treatment was convened by the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center in October 2005. The Summit provided a forum specifically for policy makers, service providers, treatment specialists, and researchers to collaborate on a coordinated response to the epidemic abuse of methamphetamine in LAC and methamphetamine-related transmission of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. The Methamphetamine Work Group plans to take all these recommendations into account when drafting its own set of recommendations for the County's response to methamphetamine epidemic.

CDC Funded Project: LAC was one of four recipients nationwide to receive funding recently from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for an intervention targeting actively using methamphetamine MSM. The Innovative Strategies for the Prevention and Treatment of Crystal Methamphetamine Use Among Men Who Have Sex with Men (MSM) Project will be funded for approximately \$750,000 over three years. This proposal was developed by OAPP staff in conjunction with researchers from the Friends Research Institute and the Van Ness Recovery House.

Alcohol and Drug Program Administration (ADPA) Activities

ADPA has conducted several activities to address the methamphetamine epidemic. The following provides a brief summary:

- ***Assessment Activities:*** In order to assess the extent of methamphetamine problems in Los Angeles County, ADPA prepared reports on trends in methamphetamine use in Los Angeles County. This information was used by ADPA to incorporate methamphetamine-specific prevention requirements in its contracts with community-based prevention providers. Methamphetamine-specific activities such as including a methamphetamine prevention component have been added as required elements for all contracts with 34 ADPA contracted community prevention programs.
- ***Policy Analysis:*** ADPA also identified, analyzed, and tracked state and federal legislation that affects national and local public policy approaches to the methamphetamine problem.
- ***Enhancing Prevention Activities:*** ADPA will work collaboratively also with the State Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs communications office in distributing public service announcements as part of a State-wide methamphetamine media campaign. This campaign is a joint partnership between the State and the Partnership for a Drug-Free America.
- ***Expanding Provider Training:*** In conjunction with University of California at Los Angeles' Integrated Substance Abuse Program, ADPA developed and implemented a series of training sessions for County-contracted substance abuse agencies and Public Health personnel to improve knowledge regarding methamphetamine use and best practices for the treatment of methamphetamine addiction by County-contracted service providers, Public Health employees, and other interested persons.
- ***Methamphetamine Treatment:*** ADPA's network of residential and non-residential services providers are continuing to provide treatment and recovery services for methamphetamine clients. Methamphetamine-specific treatment and recovery services are incorporated into the current continuum of care. ADPA also provides training to its contracted agencies to support their use of evidence-based "best practices." Some contract providers have implemented and are utilizing evidence-based models that were specifically developed to work with the methamphetamine addict.

PLANNED NEXT STEPS

DPH is currently implementing or plans to implement the following actions to combat this crisis in our County:

- ***Continued Expansion of Training for Providers:*** A series of trainings for health care service providers related to methamphetamine use and abuse are being conducted by the Alcohol and Drug Program Administration (ADPA) and the Pacific Southwest Addiction Technology Transfer Center. These trainings are being offered as a part of the ADPA-UCLA Lecture Series and provide information on the physical and psychological effects of methamphetamine, and ways to effectively treat methamphetamine use and abuse. These series were conducted in August 2005, December 2005, February 2006, June 2006, and September, 2006.
- ***Dissemination of Methamphetamine Fact Sheets:*** A methamphetamine fact sheet developed by the members of the Methamphetamine Work Group for health care providers, dentists, and mental health

providers will be available at www.lapublichealth.org within the next 30 days. It contains information on the effects of methamphetamine use and local information and treatment resources.

- ***Dissemination of Methamphetamine Letter to Providers:*** An informational letter about crystal methamphetamine developed by DPH for health care providers, mental health providers and community-based agencies will be ready for distribution within the next 30 days.
- ***Increasing Availability of Methamphetamine Resource Information by Phone:*** Currently, a referral line operated by the Community Resource and Assessment Centers, operates during office hours. We plan to supplement this by utilizing a resource number such as 211 which is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and provides County residents with a live person available to answer questions and offer referrals for substance treatment options.
- ***Methamphetamine Resource Guide:*** A methamphetamine resource guide is being developed by the members of the Methamphetamine Work Group and will be available at www.lapublichealth.org within the next 90 days. It will contain information on local resources, including drug treatment facilities.
- ***Implementation of DPH Methamphetamine Website:*** A Crystal Methamphetamine Webpage for disseminating information to the public, including links to local resources, will be up and running at www.lapublichealth.org within the next 90 days. This will consolidate and expand information currently available on the public health website.
- ***Control of Alcohol and Illegal Drugs in Commercial Sex Venues (CSVs):*** The regulations issued by the Health Officer in 2005 for the CSVs include specific prohibitions against alcohol and drug use and require the CSVs to take specific actions for control and referral to community treatment. This is important because of the nexus of methamphetamine use and unprotected sexual behavior among MSMs.
- ***Expansion and Intensification of Collaboration Activities:*** In addition, DPH will continue to build on existing collaboration among public health programs, including Alcohol and Drug Administration (ADPA), Sexually Transmitted Disease Program (STD), the Office of AIDS Programs and Policy (OAPP), and the HIV Epidemiology Program, as well as other public agencies, including Department of Mental Health Services (DMH) and Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), and will invite participation by additional agencies, including the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD) and the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), in order to coordinate the County's efforts around the methamphetamine issue.
- ***Continued Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Existing Department Drug and HIV Programs:*** Both OAPP and ADPA will continue to evaluate and adjust their current contracts for prevention and treatment to assure that program work plans or scopes of work better address methamphetamine issues.

SUGGESTED RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BOARD RESPONSE

In order to ensure the County continues to address this epidemic, the following recommendations are being offered for the Board's consideration:

1. Instruct the County's legislative advocates to support legislation which would provide additional federal or state funding to:
 - a. Create and expand State and local programs to further educate health care professionals about identifying and treating methamphetamine addiction;
 - b. Provide funding for methamphetamine awareness, education and prevention efforts including a social marketing campaign targeting at-risk populations for methamphetamine use; and
 - c. Provide additional funding for in-patient methamphetamine related treatment admission beds.
2. Instruct the Department of Public Health to:
 - a. Continue to analyze and evaluate the programs of ADPA and OAPP to identify opportunities to strengthen their methamphetamine response. This should include an analysis and evaluation of

their data/demographic collection systems to determine ways these activities may be coordinated so that certain risk groups can be consistently identified and effectively served across their funded programs and services.

- b. Ensure that community-based agencies that serve at-risk populations, which have agreements with ADPA and OAPP, integrate methamphetamine prevention, education, and treatment strategies in their program design.
- c. Report back in 90 days.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please let me know.

JEF:lg

- c: Chief Administrative Officer
County Counsel
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors